

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims and add new claims as set forth below:

1. (Previously Amended) An offline-online points system, comprising:

a main server configured for providing a user with an interface to submit a code, wherein the code is obtainable offline and is associated with N points, wherein each point, characterized as a purchase or attention incentive point, is redeemable and maintainable in an account for the user; and

a code server configured for maintaining valid codes and verifying, against the valid codes, that the code submitted by the user is valid such that a balance in the account for the user is increased by a predetermined number of points if the code is valid.

2. (Previously Amended) The offline-online points system of claim 1, further comprising:

a user database configured for holding the account for the user, wherein the balance of the account is M points prior to the user's submission of the code.

3. (Previously Amended) The offline-online points system of claim 2, wherein the code server is configured for updating the account balance to M+N points after the user submits the code and if the code is valid.

4. (Previously Amended) The offline-online points system of claim 2, wherein the main server is configured for updating the account balance to M+N points after the user submits the code and if the code is valid.

5. (Previously Amended) The offline-online points system of claim 2 wherein the code is C letters in length from an Alphabet of L letters.

6. (Previously Amended) The offline-online points system of claim 5, wherein C is 10.

7. (Previously Amended) The offline-online points system of claim 5, wherein L is 29.

8. (Previously Amended) The offline-online points system of claim 5, wherein L is 36.

9-23. Cancelled.

24. (Previously added) The offline-online points system of claim 1, wherein the points are maintained in the account in an encrypted form to prevent unauthorized interference with the user account.

25. (Previously added) The offline-online points system of claim 1, further comprising:

- means for generating the code; and

- means for fixing the code onto a medium such that the code is obtainable from the medium offline.

26. (Previously added) The offline-online points system of claim 25, wherein the means for fixing the code onto the medium is a printer and the medium is a bottle cap from which the code is readable to the user.

27-37. Cancelled.

38. (Previously added) A system for incentive points earning and redemption, comprising:

- an auction web server;

- a store web server;

- a web server from which the auction web server and the store web server are accessible to a user, the web server, in turn, being accessible to the user from either or both of the auction server and the store web server; and

- a user database configured for maintaining user accounts, each user account corresponding to a user for containing points earned by that user,

- wherein each point, characterized as a purchase or attention incentive point, is redeemable, and

wherein the number of points contained in the user account of a particular user relates to that user's interaction with the web server, web store server or auction server.

39. (Previously added) A system as in claim 38, further comprising:

- a code server configured for maintaining valid codes against which a code submitted by the particular user is verifiable,

- wherein the code is obtainable offline, and

- wherein the particular user's interaction involves submission of the code in relation to which the user database is configured to receive into the user account a predetermined number of points earned by that user.

40. (Previously added) A system as in claim 38, wherein the particular user's interaction involves registration, an indicia of attention to an ad, or a purchase, in relation to which the user database is configured to receive into the user account a predetermined number of points earned by that user.

41. (Previously added) A system as in claim 38, wherein the particular user's interaction involves entering a winning bid in relation to which the user database is configured to dispatch a predetermined number of points taken out of that user's account.

42. (Previously added) A system as in claim 38, wherein the points are maintained in the user account in an encrypted form to prevent unauthorized interference with the user account.

43. (Previously added) An offline-online incentive points system, comprising:

- one or more client computers;

- a network; and

- one or more servers accessible to the client computers via the network, at least one of the servers having

 - a web server.,

 - a messaging server,

a database server, wherein the web server interfaces with the network, the messaging server and the database server,

a plurality of databases serviced by the database server, including an account database and one or more of an auction database, an incentive points database, a coupon database, a bidder database, a seller database, a merchandise database, and a bid database, wherein the account database is configured for maintaining user accounts, each user account corresponding to a user for containing points earned by that user, wherein each point, characterized as a purchase or attention incentive point, is redeemable, and wherein the number of points contained in the account of a particular user relates to that user's interaction with the at least one server.

44. (Previously added) A system as in claim 43, wherein the at least one server further has a code server including a code database;

wherein a code server is configured for maintaining valid codes against which a code submitted by the particular user is verifiable,

wherein the code is obtainable offline, and

wherein the particular user's interaction involves submission of the code in relation to which the account database is configured to receive into the user account a predetermined number of points earned by that user.

45. (Previously added) A system as in claim 43, wherein the at least one server further has

an authentication server configured for controlling user access by authenticating submitted user accounts information.

46. (Currently amended) A system as in claim ~~46~~43, wherein the particular user's interaction involves registration, an indicia of attention to an ad, or a purchase, in relation to which the account database is configured to receive into the user account a predetermined number of points earned by that user.

47. (Previously added) A system as in claim 43, wherein the particular user's interaction involves entering a winning bid in relation to which the account database is configured to dispatch a predetermined number of points taken out of that user's account.

48. (Previously added) A system as in claim 43, wherein the network includes the Internet and the web server and messaging server are integrated in an Internet server.

49. (Previously added) A system as in claim 43, wherein the points are maintained in the account in an encrypted form to prevent unauthorized interference with the user account.

50. (Previously added) A method for offline-online handling of incentive points, comprising:

obtaining a code offline;

submitting the code online to a server that has valid codes, wherein the code is associated with N points maintained by the server in a user account, wherein each point, characterized as a purchase or attention incentive point, is redeemable; and

verifying the submitted code against the valid codes to determine if it is valid, wherein if the submitted code is valid, a predetermined number of points are added to the user account.

51. (Previously added) A method as in claim 50, wherein the points are maintained in the user account in an encrypted form to prevent unauthorized interference with the user account.

52. (Previously added) A method as in claim 50, wherein the points in the user account are redeemed for a gift or through an auction.

53. (Previously added) A method as in claim 52, wherein the auction is one of a standard auction, a Dutch auction, a progressive auction, a buy-or-bid auction, and a declining bid auction.

54. (Previously added) A method as in claim 52, wherein the auction involves one or more of an automated closing, automated bidding, automated selling, and auction alert.

55. (Previously added) A method as in claim 50, wherein points are added to the user account by authorizing credit points.

56. (Previously added) A method as in claim 50, wherein points are added to or redeemed from the user account in response to a point-actionable event.

57. (Previously added) A method as in claim 56, wherein the point-actionable event for which points are added is a purchase, an indicia of attention to an item on a web site, or registration, and wherein the point-actionable event for which points are redeemed is a winning auction bid.

58. (Previously added) A method as in claim 50 further comprising:

generating the code; and

fixing the code onto a medium such that the code is obtainable from the medium offline.

59. (Previously added) A method as in claim 58, wherein the code is fixed onto the medium by printing the code on a bottle cap from which the code is readable to the user.

60-70. Cancelled.

71. (New) An auction system, comprising:

a server including a web server and a messaging server;

clients;

Internet connections interfacing the clients to the server; and

a database server operatively connected via a first link to the server and operatively connected via a second link to a plurality of databases, including auction, merchandize, bidder, account and bid databases, the database server including an offer server and management tools; wherein the account database includes accounts with points that are maintained in encrypted form,

wherein, during an auction, points associated with a bid from one of the clients are set aside out of their respective account and are then permanently removed from that account if the

bid is successful, and

wherein points are permanently removed from their respective account if their time has expired.

72. (New) An integrated points auction system, comprising:

a web server;

an auction server operatively connected to the web server;

a store web server operatively connected to the web server; and

clients operatively connected to the web server;

wherein the web server is operatively connected to an auction database and a user database,

wherein the user database is associated with accounts that hold points in encrypted form,

wherein during an auction, points associated with a bid from one of the clients are set aside out of their respective account and are then permanently removed from that account if the bid is successful, and

wherein points are permanently removed from their respective account if their time has expired.